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Software Developer, Cybersecurity Analyst.

The Case for a Federation of African States South of the Sahara (FASS)

Empirical Evidence, Economic Mass, and Demographic Trajectories

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Copyright

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About The Author

Djibril Chimère Diaw

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Dedication

To

my mother Marème Fall

my father Amadou Chimère Diaw

my wife Isabelle Diaw

my children

Fatou-Chimère Diaw, Ahmadou-Chimère Diaw,

Marième-Chimère Diaw, Aïssata-Chimère Diaw .

my grandparents

Fatou Methiour Ndiaye & Waly Sega Fall

Fatou Faye & Souleymane Chimère Diaw

Teachers

To those who shall come into the world a century after me, beginning in the year two thousand and seventy-two.

To all mothers,
to those who made our coming into the world possible through the gift of themselves,
to those who, even today, carry, give birth to, nourish, protect, and raise life,
to those who, tomorrow, will continue to open the path of human existence.

To all women who, in silence or in light, have risked their bodies, their strength, and sometimes their lives so that humanity may endure.
To their quiet courage, their daily resilience, and their founding love.

May this work stand as an act of recognition,
a tribute passed on from generation to generation,
and a word of gratitude addressed to those without whom nothing would have been, nothing is, and nothing will be.

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ENGLISH

Editorial Preface

This volume advances a central proposition that is both empirical and institutional in nature: that the long-term demographic and economic trajectories of Africa south of the Sahara justify, and increasingly require, serious consideration of a federal political framework at the regional level. The argument developed across the chapters does not arise from abstract political aspiration, but from a sustained engagement with authoritative international data and historical comparison.

Drawing on official statistics from the World Bank and the United Nations, the studies assembled here establish two foundational facts. First, when analyzed as a regional aggregate rather than as a collection of fragmented nation-states, Africa south of the Sahara has already constituted a globally significant economic mass. For extended periods in the late twentieth century, its combined nominal GDP exceeded that of India and, during a substantial pre-reform interval, that of China. Second, demographic projections indicate that the region will become the primary center of global population growth over the twenty-first century, surpassing both India and China in absolute population size by mid-century and continuing to expand thereafter.

Taken together, these findings challenge the prevailing analytical frameworks through which Africa is typically interpreted. They reveal a growing mismatch between the region’s objective demographic and economic weight, on the one hand, and its institutional fragmentation and limited systemic leverage, on the other. It is precisely this mismatch that gives rise to the federal question at the heart of this book.

The concept of a Federation of African States south of the Sahara is not presented here as a utopian ideal or a uniform political blueprint. Rather, it is articulated as a rational institutional response to structural realities. In a global system increasingly organized around large, integrated economic and political entities, fragmentation imposes measurable costs in terms of bargaining power, policy coordination, market integration, and strategic autonomy. The historical evidence presented in this volume suggests that Africa’s economic underperformance cannot be adequately explained by demographic growth alone, but must be understood in relation to the absence of institutional scale commensurate with its human and productive potential.

By systematically linking population dynamics, aggregate GDP, and systemic power, the contributions in this book offer a new lens through which African integration can be evaluated. Federalism is treated not as an ideological endpoint, but as an analytical hypothesis: a means by which demographic mass may be transformed into economic capacity, and economic capacity into durable influence within global governance structures.

This volume thus invites scholars, policymakers, and African intellectuals to move beyond inherited categories and to engage with a question that has too often remained implicit: whether the political organization of Africa south of the Sahara is aligned with the scale of the challenges and opportunities it faces. In grounding this question in empirical evidence rather than normative assertion, the book seeks to elevate the debate on African unity to the level of structural necessity and historical possibility.

General Introduction

The economic, demographic, and political trajectories of Africa south of the Sahara are most often approached through fragmented analytical frameworks, dominated by national-level comparisons, per capita indicators, and normative narratives inherited from the postcolonial decades. This mode of analysis, now routinized in economic literature and institutional discourse, tends to obscure a central dimension: when considered as a regional aggregate, Africa south of the Sahara constitutes one of the largest human and economic ensembles of contemporary history.

This volume begins from a simple but rarely articulated observation: the analysis of economic and systemic power cannot be reduced to a collection of isolated state performances, nor to per capita averages. It requires a perspective centered on mass—demographic mass, productive mass, institutional mass—and on their articulation over the long term. When such a perspective is adopted, the official data produced by major international institutions reveal empirical facts that stand in tension with dominant narratives.

The contributions brought together in this book demonstrate, in particular, that the combined GDP of Africa south of the Sahara exceeded that of India and China over extended periods, and that this reality coincided with an already sustained demographic dynamic. They also show that, far from constituting a mere factor of vulnerability, African population growth is embedded in a major structural transformation of the global demographic balance in the twenty-first century.

The ambition of this volume is neither apologetic nor polemical. It is a work of empirical and conceptual reassessment, based exclusively on recognized institutional sources (the World Bank and the United Nations), aimed at reexamining the analytical categories used to think about Africa in the world economy. In doing so, the book proposes a shift in perspective: from an Africa conceived as a fragmented periphery to an Africa envisioned as a potential systemic ensemble, whose political fragmentation increasingly appears as a historical anomaly rather than an immutable condition.

From this standpoint, the question of a federation of African states south of the Sahara is not approached as an abstract ideal, but as a rational hypothesis that can be discussed in the light of economic and demographic facts. The volume thus invites a rethinking of the links between population, production, and power, and calls for the integration of Africa into analyses of contemporary transformations of the world system.

For a Federation of States of Africa South of the Sahara

Empirical Foundations, Aggregate Economic Mass, and Demographic Trajectory

Abstract

The question of political and economic integration in Africa south of the Sahara is generally addressed from normative, institutional, or historical perspectives, and only rarely on the basis of a rigorous macroeconomic demonstration grounded in observed aggregates. Yet official World Bank data show that the combined GDP of Africa south of the Sahara, measured in current US dollars, exceeded that of India from 1976 to 1998, as well as in 2005, 2006, and 2008, and exceeded that of China from 1976 to 1991, with the exception of the year 1989.

At the same time, United Nations demographic projections (World Population Prospects 2024) indicate that by 2050 the population of Africa south of the Sahara will surpass that of both India and China, and could exceed 3.3 billion by 2100, concentrating a substantial share of global population growth.

This article argues that the persistent disconnect between this economic and demographic mass, on the one hand, and the current political fragmentation of the region, on the other, constitutes a structural constraint on the emergence of African systemic power. On empirical and analytical grounds, it calls for a serious and informed debate on the establishment of a Federation of States of Africa south of the Sahara as a rational institutional horizon.

Keywords: Africa south of the Sahara; federalism; aggregate GDP; demography; regional integration; systemic power; World Bank; United Nations.

1. Introduction

The political fragmentation of Africa south of the Sahara is frequently presented as an irreversible historical legacy or as a quasi-natural feature of the international order. Debates on African integration thus remain largely confined to diplomatic, ideological, or institutional registers, and are only rarely grounded in a rigorous analysis of aggregate macroeconomic magnitudes.

Yet comparative political economy rests on a fundamental principle: the capacity of an entity to exert influence within the global system depends less on the number of political units that compose it than on its consolidated economic, demographic, and institutional mass. From this perspective, Africa south of the Sahara constitutes a singular case: a politically fragmented region that is nevertheless historically and potentially endowed with a mass comparable to that of the largest continental powers.

This article advances a simple thesis: the available empirical data fully justify the examination of a Federation of States of Africa south of the Sahara not as an abstract ideal, but as a rational institutional option grounded in measurable economic and demographic realities.

2. A Largely Overlooked Macroeconomic Reality

2.1 The Dominant Analytical Bias

The dominant economic literature rarely compares Africa south of the Sahara, considered as a regional aggregate, with the major Asian economies. Comparisons instead privilege either individual states or per capita indicators, which mechanically leads to an underestimation of the region’s total economic mass.

This methodological bias produces a persistent representation of marginality, regardless of the aggregate data that are directly observable.

2.2 The Central Stylized Fact: A Historically Superior Aggregate GDP

Based on official World Bank data (indicator NY.GDP.MKTP.CD, nominal GDP in current US dollars), it emerges that:

- the combined GDP of Africa south of the Sahara exceeded that of India from 1976 to 1998, as well as in 2005, 2006, and 2008;
- it exceeded that of China from 1976 to 1991, with the exception of the year 1989.

These results, counterintuitive in light of dominant narratives, are empirically verifiable and methodologically transparent. They demonstrate that a significant African economic mass has existed independently of any federal political framework.

3. The Demographic Trajectory: A Systemic Turning Point Underway

3.1 United Nations Projections

According to the World Population Prospects 2024, the population of Africa south of the Sahara is expected to reach approximately:

- 2.1 billion inhabitants by 2050,
- more than 3.3 billion by 2100.

This dynamic contrasts sharply with the stabilization and subsequent decline projected for China’s population, and with the progressive slowdown of demographic growth in India.

3.2 Demographic Mass and Systemic Power

In world economic history, no entity endowed with such a durable demographic mass has remained structurally marginal when equipped with institutions capable of aggregating production, markets, and political decision-making. The central issue is therefore not population size per se, but institutional capacity to transform human mass into economic and strategic power.

4. Political Fragmentation as a Structural Constraint

Africa south of the Sahara currently comprises more than forty sovereign states, often of modest economic size, endowed with heterogeneous currencies, trade policies, and regulatory frameworks. This fragmentation:

- limits the emergence of an integrated internal market;
- weakens international bargaining power;
- prevents large-scale pooling of industrial, energy, and technological policies.

Comparison with the trajectories of China, India, or even the European Union shows that institutional aggregation invariably precedes or accompanies the aggregation of power.

5. Toward a Federation of States of Africa South of the Sahara: Rational Foundations

5.1 A Federation as an Aggregator of Mass

A Federation of States of Africa south of the Sahara would not require the erasure of existing states, but their articulation within a federal framework enabling:

- partial unification of strategic economic policies;
- consolidation of the internal market;
- unified representation in major international institutions.

5.2 Empirical Continuity and Institutional Rupture

Historical data show that the region already constituted a significant global economic mass without a federal political structure. The contemporary challenge is to align future demographic trajectories with an institutional architecture capable of converting this mass into durable systemic power.

6. Limits and Analytical Precautions

It must be emphasized that:

- nominal GDP is sensitive to exchange rate fluctuations;
- a federation does not mechanically guarantee economic efficiency;
- historical trajectories do not automatically determine future outcomes.

Nevertheless, these limitations do not invalidate the central diagnosis: the absence of political aggregation now constitutes a major explanatory factor in the underutilization of African potential.

7. Conclusion

World Bank and United Nations data converge toward a clear conclusion: Africa south of the Sahara possesses, both historically and prospectively, an economic and demographic mass comparable to that of the great continental powers.

In this context, the question of a Federation of States of Africa south of the Sahara no longer belongs to the realm of political utopia, but to that of rational debate grounded in measurable facts. The real issue is not whether Africa can become a systemic actor, but whether it will equip itself with institutions capable of transforming its human and economic mass into collective power.

Transversal Conclusion

The analyses assembled in this volume converge toward a central conclusion: the economic and demographic history of Africa south of the Sahara, when read at the appropriate scale of the regional aggregate, profoundly contradicts dominant representations of a structurally marginal Africa. The data show that, over several decades, an African economic mass existed that was comparable to—or even greater than—that of major Asian economies, and that this mass was constituted alongside, rather than in opposition to, sustained demographic growth.

This observation requires an analytical reversal. The fundamental problem has never been a lack of population or an absence of production, but rather the structural inability to transform these masses into durable systemic power. This inability does not stem from demographic or cultural fatalism, but from a fragmented institutional framework, inherited from history and increasingly ill-suited to a world organized around large, integrated continental blocs.

Looking toward the twenty-first century, the key question is therefore no longer whether Africa south of the Sahara will matter demographically and economically in the world—United Nations projections already answer this in the affirmative—but in what form this mass will be translated politically, economically, and institutionally. A persistently fragmented Africa risks dissipating its potential power, whereas an Africa capable of developing credible federal mechanisms could fundamentally alter its historical trajectory.

Federalization thus appears neither as a utopia nor as an ideological injunction, but as a strategic hypothesis consistent with the observed facts. It represents a possible framework for aligning demography, production, and governance, and for fostering a capacity for negotiation, planning, and investment commensurate with the challenges of the century.

Ultimately, this book argues for the reintegration of Africa south of the Sahara into the field of major systemic global analyses—not as an object of assistance or unfavorable comparison, but as a historical actor in the making, bearing a human and economic mass whose political meaning remains, to a large extent, yet to be constructed.